SHRI P G NARAYANAN: Admittedly,, the country is much benefited by the marvellous contribution of ' *Thiruvalluvar*;. I want to know from the hon. Minister as to whether there is any proposal to telecast the life history of *'Thiruvalluvar'* and to telecast his couplets; and whether any private company has applied for telecasting the *'Thirukural* serials.

MR. SPEAKER: Second part will not be allowed.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: So far as this great man is concerned, works were done by him 2, 000 years ago and records of his life are not available. I personally tried to find out at least the bio-data of this great man his place of birth, when he was born or when he left us for heavenly abode, etc. but, we have got hold of some of his works and those are in three parts. One is' *Aram*'. called the ethics; the second is *'Porul*, the material aspects of life; and the third is *'Inbam'* love or married life. This has nothing to do with religion., It is a great philosophy not only for India, but also for the whole world. It touches every aspect of human life. In fact, it touches every aspect where life is there. Therefore, we are trying to depict the works done throuh the electronic media the philosophy of this great man. But so far as the life aspect is concerned, we have no records available with us. If the hon. Members have got any records with them or if they know the place where the records are laying, we will be greatly benefited to get those records and make it known to the people through the electronic media.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Pattanayak, this is on 'Thirukural' only. So, you do not have to say any thing else.

SHRI SARAT CHANDRA PATTANAYAK: I would like to know from the hon. Minister through you, Sir, as to whether the Government has set up any expert committee to select the famous literary work in other languages also for telecasting?

MR. SPEAKER: No, This is not allowed. Next question.

Hike in Steel Prices

*658. SHRI PRATAPRAO B. BHONSLE: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state;

(a) whether the steel Authority of India Limited proposes to hike steel prices;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Steel Authority of India Limited also propose to improve the quality of steel in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (e). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). The last general price increase based on increases in input costs was announced in September, 1990 Thereafter, there have been increases in the prices of various inputs required for production of steel.

After deregulation on 16.01.1992, price increase by SAIL will depend upon these input cost increases and the market conditions.

(c) to (e). Quality improvement is a continuous process and for this, requisite steps are taken by SAIL from time to time.

Various measures covering different aspects of operations have been taken to upgrade product quality such as:-

1. Strict adherence to technological norms;

2. Modernisation and technological upgradation including:-

(i) Improved raw material preparation.

(ii) Introduction of quality improvement technologies like pre-treatment of hotmetal, secondary refining of steel, computerised process control, etc.

3. continuous R & D and new product development.

4. Improving inter-pant synergy to produce better quality, value-added steel products.

The percentage of tested product in SAIL Plants has increased from 75% in 1988-89 to 88% in 1991-92.

[*Translation*]

SHRI PRATAPRAO B. BHONSLE: Hon'ble Mr. Speaker, the hon'ble minister has not given reply to my question. My question is very clear. I had asked whether the Government proposes to hike steel prices and what will be the yearwise situation due to that proposal? No attempt has been made to give a reply to this. In the end, it has been stated that the percentage of tested product in SAIL Plants has increased from 75% in 1988-89 to 88% in 1991-92. When the capacity has increased, then what is the reason behind increasing the prices? the details which should have been given have not been given. Does the hon'ble minister wish to give details in this regard?

[*English*]

SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, steel has been decontrolled from 16th January, 1992. Under the decontrol regime, so far as the integrated Steel Plants are concerned, they are independent to decide about the price hike. that is why I have not said about a specific time and date when the price may or may not be increased. It is absolutely in their wisdom.

As I said in my reply, the last hike was in September, 1990. After that the input costs of steel have gone up. But when the decontrol was made, the Government desired that immediate increase of steel price should not be there. Hence, it has not been done. But now they are at liberty to do it. At an appropriate time-when the input costs of various items have been increased, say about Rs. 1,200 to 1, 500 - the SAIL may have to increase the price.

It is a fact that the efficiency of production has increased. That is why in spite of the fact that they are absorbing input cash increase of our Rs. 1,200 per tonnes , SAIL has been able to make a profit of amount Rs. 280 crore this year. This is mainly because of the efficient running of the steel plants. The credit goes to the management as well as to the workers.

SHRI PRATAP RAO B. BHONSLE: Hon'ble Mr. speaker, Sir, I have asked whether there has been an increase in prices or not, after decontrol. What is the reasons for the increase in prices. The hon'ble Minister has stated about the policy to be adopted in future. My second supplementary is that the new policy of the Government will cause the prices to increase? what will be its ratio?

[*English*]

SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, because of the decontrol policy , there is no point of Government's increasing the price. It is absolutely a commercial aspect. But I can share with this House that I have with me a big chart which shows the prices on 16.1.1992 and on 1.4.1992. Other than on account of excise duty and the railway freight, No increases, have been made by SAIL.

In the secondary sector, the price is higher than twoseaj the integrated steel plants. Even there, initially when decontrol was announced, there was a slight increase by Rs. 100 to Rs. 200.per tonne. In the market, steel prices have not gone up abnormally. It is hardly Rs. 100 to Rs.200 per tonne. But as I said, a time will come when SAIL has to increase the price. It is up to the SAIL to decide. I cannot say about that. (Interruptions) They are authorised to do it.

[*Translation*]

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hob'ble minister as to how much foreign exchange had to be spent by India on the import of steel during the last one year and from which countrues steel was imported ?Secondly, is this correct that inspire of making its best efforts India has not become self-reliant in the matter of steel. By exporting at cheapreltsion to foreign countries we import steel in very huge quantity, when this practice will end. Please reply specifically.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: The question relates to decontrol policy. If you want to reply, I have no objection.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: On this particular issue, the next qestiuon is there. He can be allowed to ask on that.

MR. SPEAKER: if you have the information, you can give it now.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, we require about 7 million tonnes of scrap in the country Car availability ie 3 million tonnes in the country..

Apart from that, sponge iron is also a substitute for scrap. 1. 28 million tonnes is there. We import up to 3 million tonnes. Becase the industry was suffering, the Government has reduced the customs duty from 35 per cent to 10 per cent. Now the industry is not a facing that difficulty that they were facing. As an alternative, we are encouraging the sponge iron production. From 1.2 million tonnes, the production will ultimately go up to 5 million tonnes because some new gas-based and coal-based sponge iron plants are coming up in the country and they will start production within the two or three years.

SHRI E. AHAMED: There was a freight equalisation scheme which was very helpful to the Sothern States. After the abolition of this freight equalisation scheme, the industry in Sothern States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala is finding it extremely difficult to meet the requirements because of the unjustifiable and unreasonable hike in the price of steel material. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government will consider this aspect and give some protection to the tiny steel industries in the Southern States to meet this unreasonable hike in the price of steel.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV; Freight equalisation, as such, has been abolished. But keeping in sue what the hon. Member has stated the Government has decided that for those State which are producting steel, actual freight will be charged in those areas. southern and Westrern States which were getting the privilege of paying less, will now be charged freight of Rs. 1080 per tonne for steel and Rs.730 per tonnes for prigiorn orthe actual freight whichever is less. In other words, at the moment, the integrated steel manths are contributing about Rs. 100 crores on this account. So, it is not a fact that the consumers in the Western and Southern and also the Northern States are being deprived of their benefit. The Government is giving freight protection to them. The Eastern Sector used to contribute about Rs. 88 crore per months as additional freight. They are actually paying actual freight which is less than Rs. 1080 per tonne. It is not a fact that the Southern and Western States are not getting the benefit. I have already informed the concerned Chief Ministers and they are satisfied. This sort of confusion should not be there.

Gas-Based Power Projects

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*669. KUMARI PADMASREE KUDUMULA:
SHRI GANGADHARA SANIPALLI:

Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the proposals received by the Union Government from various States for setting up of gas-based power projects which are pending at present, State-wise;